

## LOOKING AHEAD TO SPRING

*We appreciate your patience and cooperation during this challenging winter.*

**P**eoples Energy knows that this winter's gas bills have been a burden to many. Customers across the country paid more to heat their homes this winter because of colder weather and major increases in the price that utilities had to pay for gas. Peoples Energy passes these costs through to its customers without any mark up.

Despite higher bills resulting from these gas costs, we appreciate the efforts of the vast majority of customers who have kept their accounts current or entered in heating assistance or bill management plans.

We have worked diligently to help customers by offering payment options, financial assistance programs and energy conservation tips. The company also enhanced customer service by extending Call Center hours to 24 hours during the week and extending hours on Saturday, adding toll-free customer service phone numbers and broadening our payment plan options.

In February and early March, Peoples Energy hosted Customer Open Days in seven Chicago communities and on the north shore. During these events we

helped customers understand the Budget Payment Plan and grants from the Department of Energy's Warmth program. Over 200,000 customers are enrolled in the Budget Plan. In 2000, the company has already participated in more than 40 other community outreach activities this year.

The small percentage of customers with payment problems are encouraged to contact us immediately to make payment arrangements. The company has offered customers a 30-day extension to avoid disconnection. Customers who have not made any payment since December 15 will be eligible for this extension on April 16.

Beginning April 1, 90 percent of the cost of disconnection will be waived for customers who call to request a payment plan.

Financial assistance is available. The Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) is a federal grant that assists households with combined income below 150 percent of the poverty level with utility bills. To apply, call the Community Economic Development Association (CEDA) at 1-812-456-4100.